



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION 10
1200 Sixth Avenue
Seattle, Washington 98101

MAY 21 1997

960494
EC-2

Reply To
Attn Of: ECO-088

Coy Jemmett, Forest Supervisor
Nez Perce National Forest
Route 2, Box 475
Grangeville, Idaho 83530

Re: Middle Fork Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Nez Perce National Forest, Idaho

Dear Mr. Jemmett:

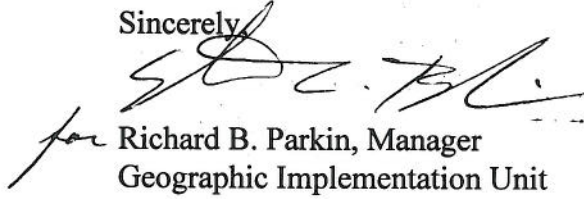
This letter replaces our March 14, 1997 letter regarding the Middle Fork draft EIS. The Environmental Protection Agency has received the Middle Fork draft EIS for review in accordance with our responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act. We conducted a limited review of the draft EIS, focussing on water quality impacts.

Based upon a limited review, we have rated the draft EIS EC-2 (Environmental Concerns -Insufficient Information). We are concerned that implementation of best management practices and associated mitigation measures may not ensure protection of beneficial uses of streams and rivers within and downstream of the project area. It is not clear that mitigation measures implemented on past projects have helped to offset the impacts from timber harvest and related activities. Additional information (such as results of effectiveness monitoring efforts) is needed on how proposed BMPs and mitigation measures will, in fact, offset the impacts of the proposed road construction and timber harvest activities. We also are concerned that implementation of the preferred alternative would result in the loss of some of the roadless characteristics of the project area, increased habitat fragmentation/disruption, degradation of air quality, overall cumulative effects of the proposed action, and a reduction in primitive backcountry recreational opportunities. We hope to work with the Nez Perce National Forest in the future to try to resolve these issues at the broader management planning level.

An explanation of the EPA rating system for draft EISs is enclosed for your reference.

This rating and a summary of these comments will be published in the Federal Register. We appreciate this opportunity for early involvement in this project. If you have questions, please contact John Bregar in our Office of Ecosystems and Communities at (206) 553-1984.

Sincerely,



for Richard B. Parkin, Manager
Geographic Implementation Unit

Summary Paragraph Form

ERP Number D -AFS-L65278-ID

RATING EC-2

Name of EPA Official Responsible For Review Of Project (Principal Reviewer)

John Bregar

Summary

*expressed environmental
SA about water and air quality and*
EPA is concerned that implementation of best management practices and associated mitigation measures may not ensure protection of beneficial uses downstream of the project area. ~~It is not clear that mitigation measures implemented on past projects have helped to offset the impacts from timber harvest activities.~~ Additional information is needed on how proposed BMPs and mitigation measures will ~~in fact~~ offset the proposed timber harvest activities.

Approved For Publication

(Initials of OFA
Approving Official)

Note: Transmit 2 copies to MIU